



# The Polarizing Effects of Partisan and Mainstream News

Natalie (Talia) Jomini Stroud

Associate Professor

Department of Communication Studies

University of Texas at Austin

Conference on American Gridlock: Causes, Characteristics and  
Consequences of Polarization, American University, May 9, 2014



# Background

- Partisan selective exposure
- Polarization
- Mainstream news popularity
- Does mainstream news viewing stunt the affects of likeminded news exposure?



United States Department of State  
Bureau of Oceans and International  
Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement  
for the  
**Keystone XL Project**  
Executive Summary

January 2014

Applicant for Presidential Permit: TransCanada Keystone Pipeline, LP





Control Condition

Likeminded News Condition

Fox News for Republicans  
MSNBC for Democrats  
Random for True Independents

Mainstream News Condition

NBC News

Likeminded, then Mainstream News  
Condition

Mainstream, then Likeminded Condition

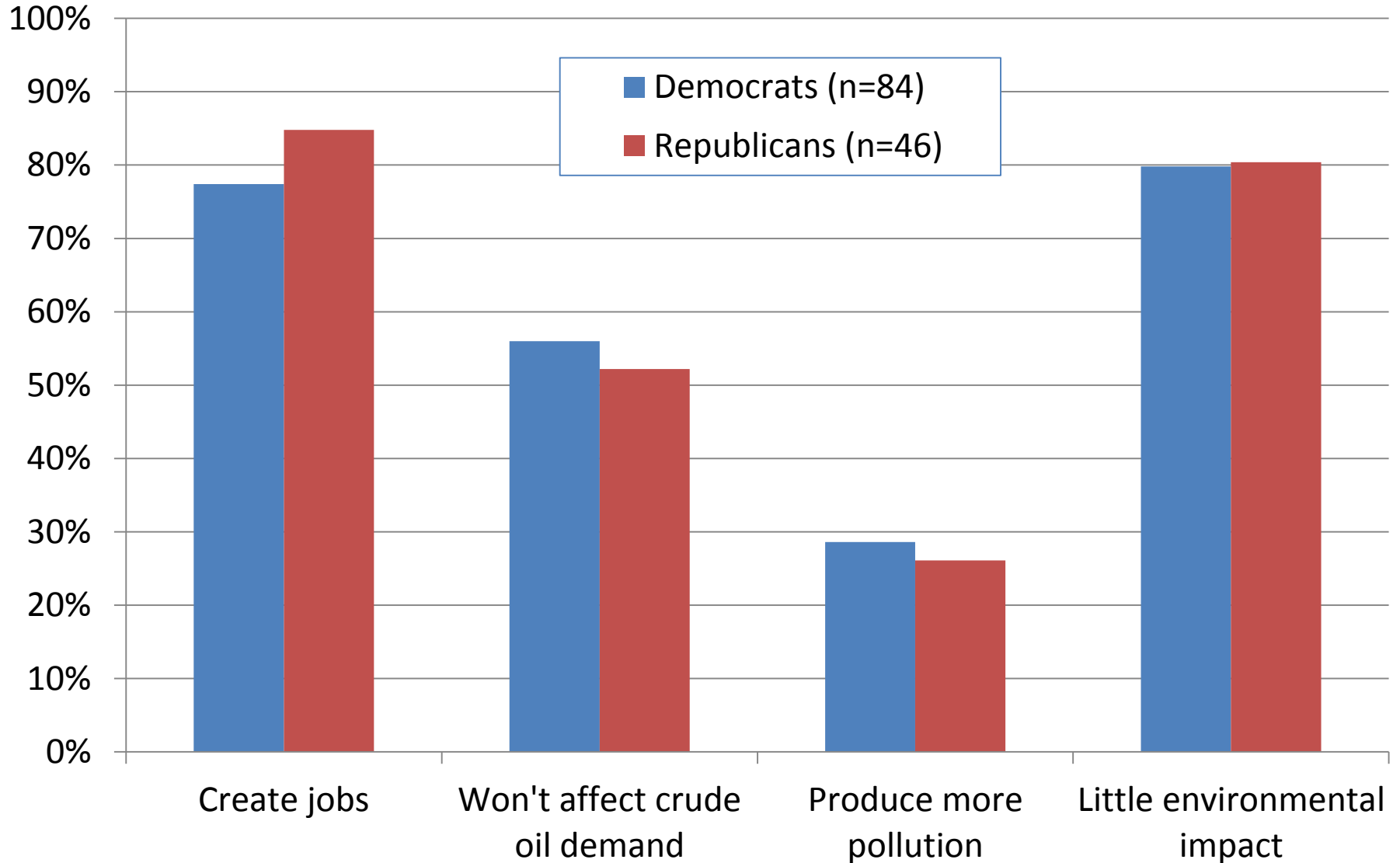
Amazon.com's mTurk  
n=274



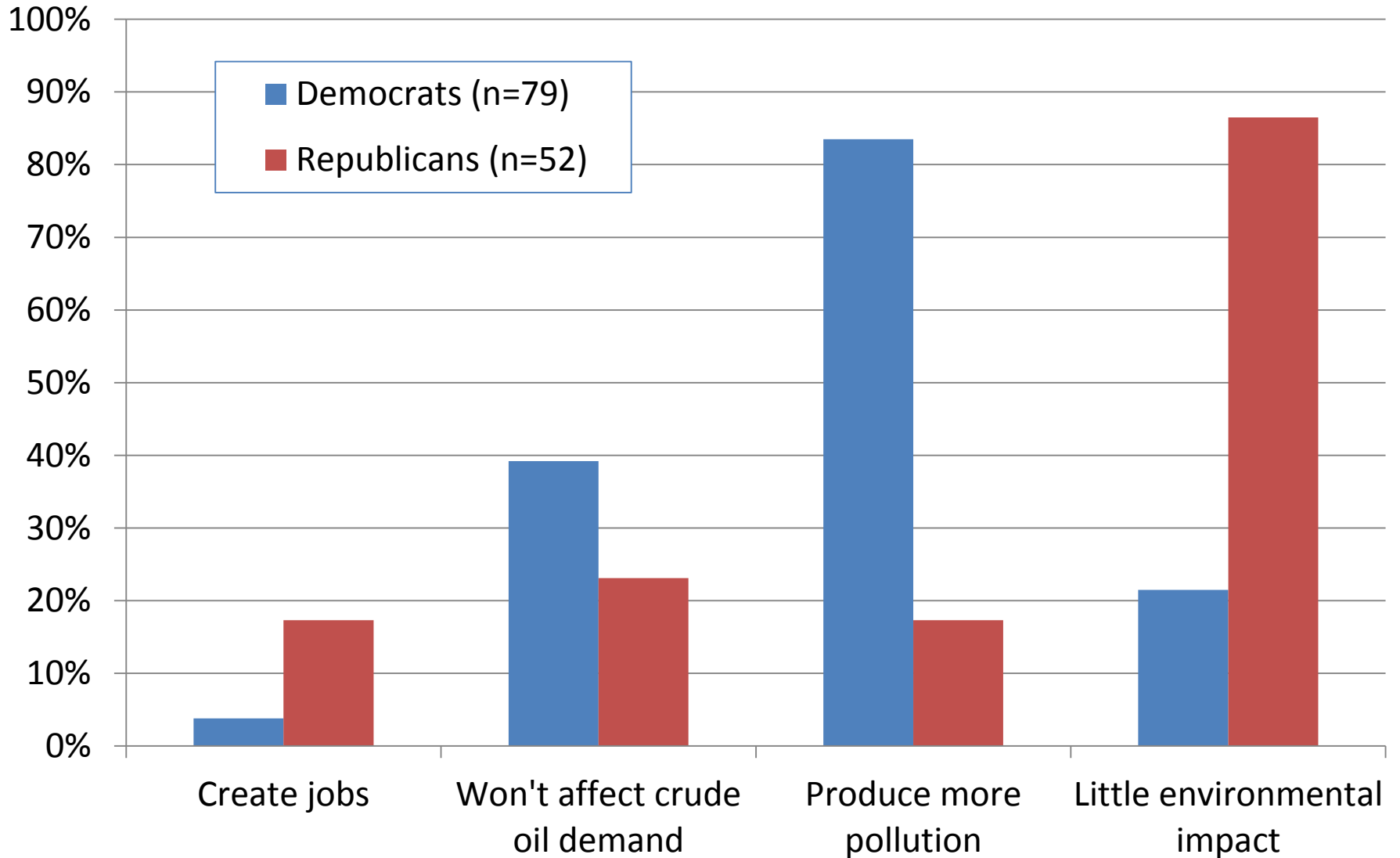
# Hypotheses

- Partisans viewing the mainstream clip will exhibit fewer differences in the facts shown than partisans viewing likeminded clips.
- Media trust will be affected by clip order, whether mainstream or partisan is seen first
- Beliefs about the pipeline will be most polarized in the likeminded condition, next in the mixed conditions, and finally in the mainstream condition relative to the control
- Partisanship will predict attitudes more strongly when people view likeminded news than a combination of likeminded and mainstream, which will be stronger than mainstream news only.

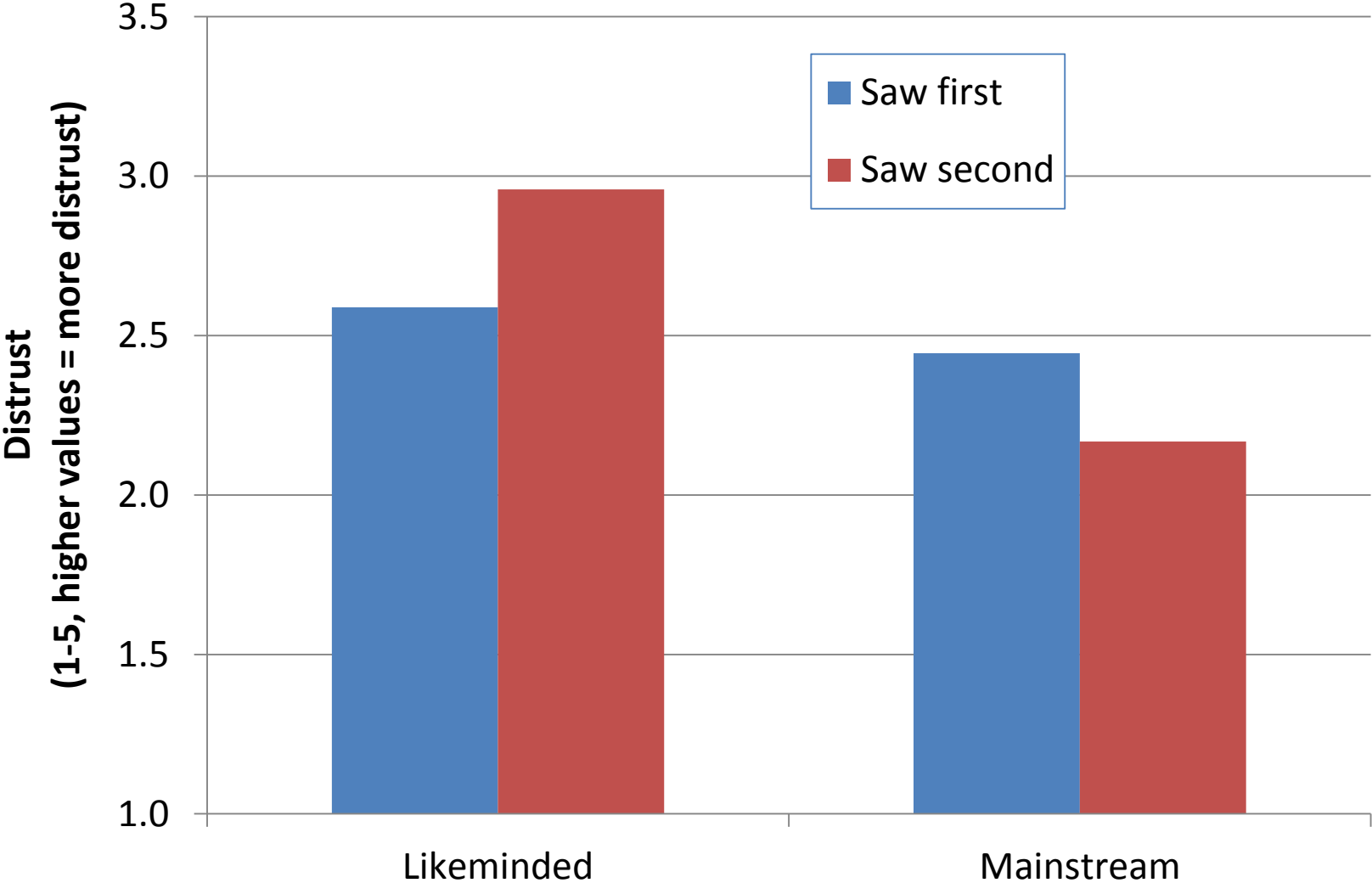
# What Did the Report Find? (Mainstream Clip)



# What Did the Report Find? (Partisan Clips)

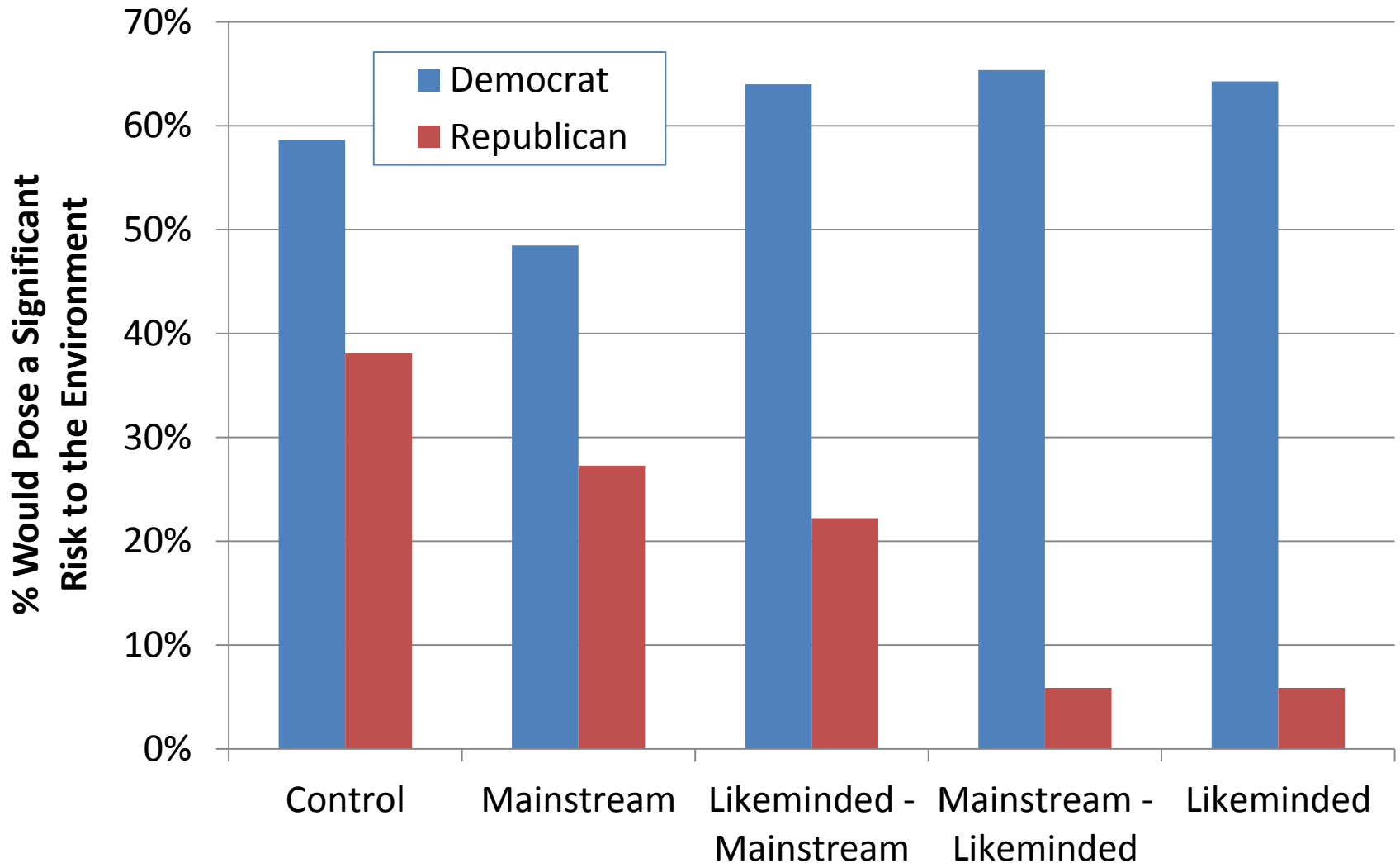


# Media Trust

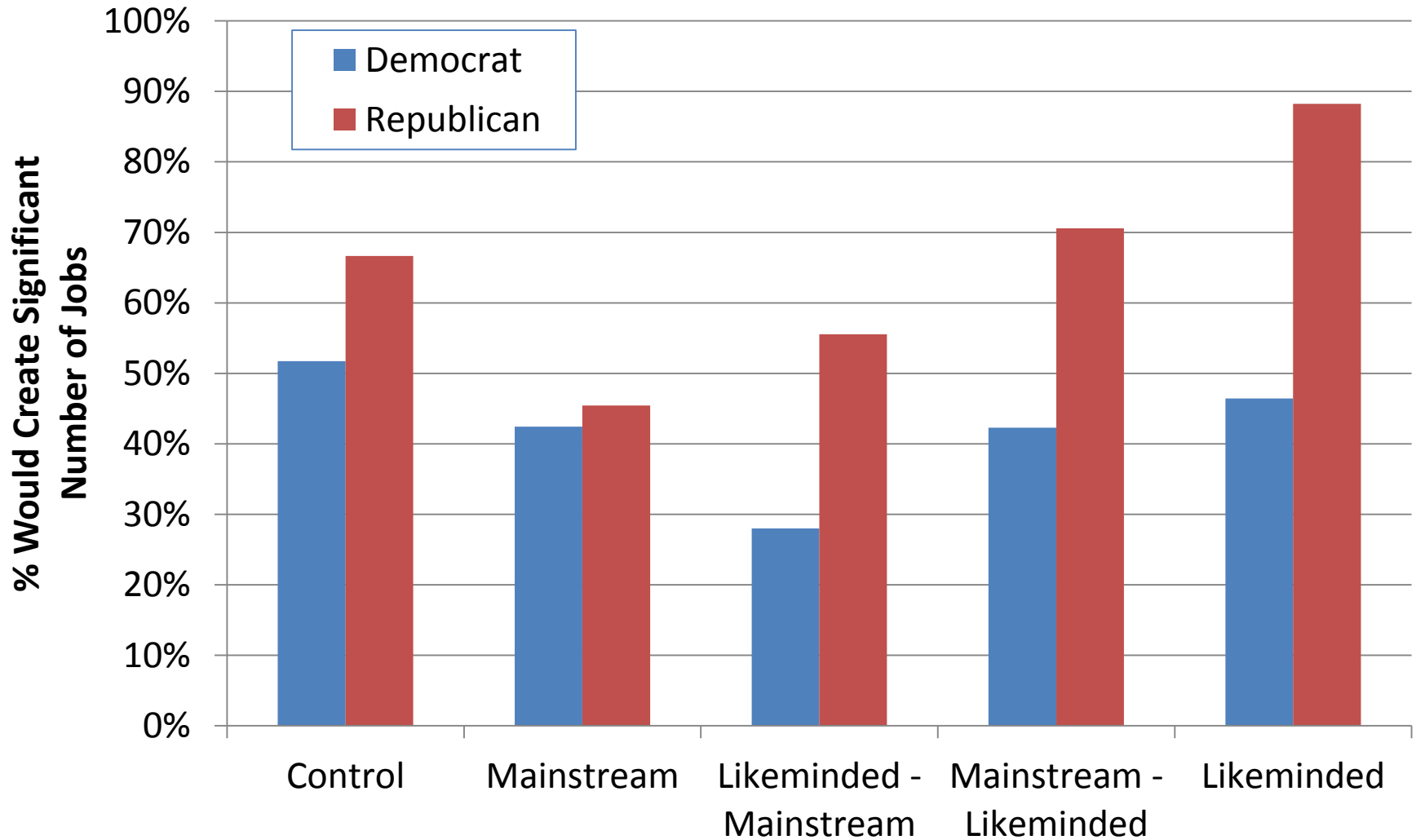




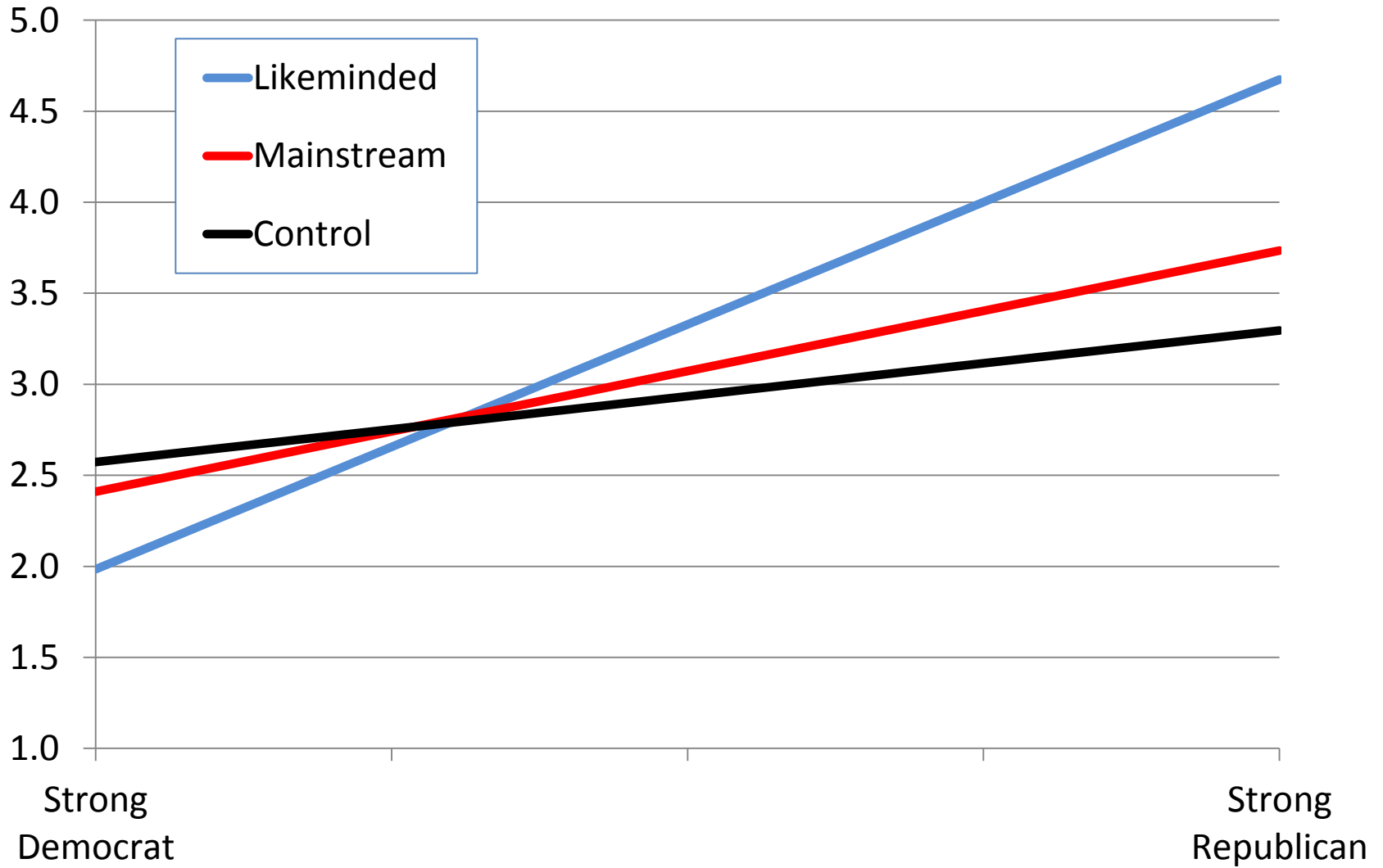
# Do You Think The Pipeline Would or Would Not Pose a Significant Risk to the Environment?



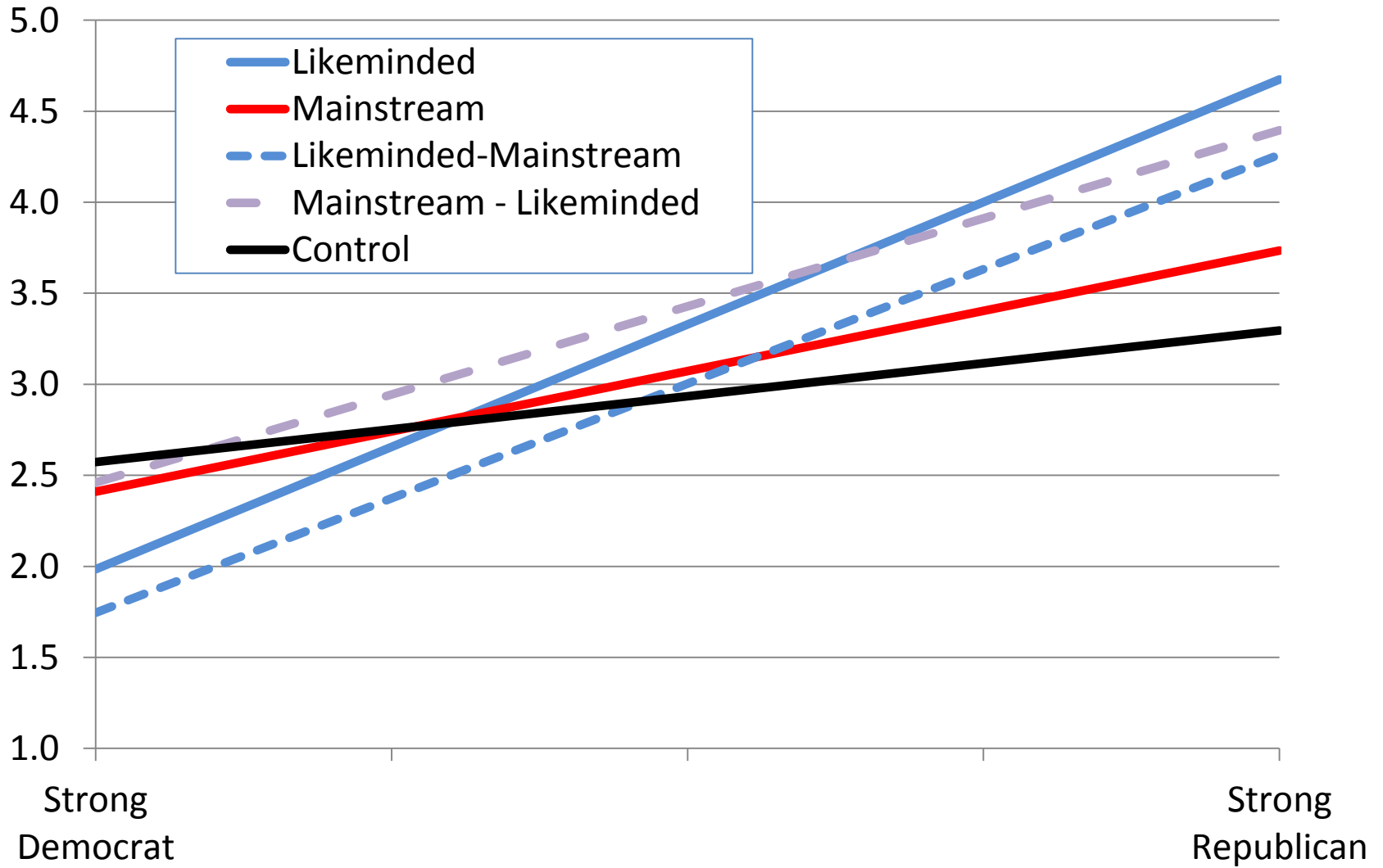
# Do You Think The Pipeline Would or Would Not Create a Significant Number of Jobs?



# Support for Keystone XL Pipeline



# Support for Keystone XL Pipeline





# Conclusions

- Mainstream and partisan clips present different facts & viewers recognize the differences
- Assessments of media credibility vary depending on order
- Mainstream media doesn't affect partisan gap in beliefs, but any hint of likeminded media does
- Effect of partisanship on attitudes varies by condition



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